

Ending Violence, Exploitation, Ecological Destruction and War: Creating a Culture of Peace

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Theme: [History](#)

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The date 11 November is well-known and commemorated in many parts of the world because it marks the Armistice ending World War I - 'the Great War' - in 1918.

In the evocative words used by Kurt Vonnegut Jr., an atheist humanist, in his novel *Breakfast of Champions*, the day is remembered thus:

'When I was a boy ... all the people of all the nations which fought in the First World War were silent during the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of Armistice Day, which was the eleventh day of the eleventh month. It was at that minute in nineteen-hundred and eighteen, that millions upon millions of human beings stopped butchering one another. I have talked to old men who were on battlefields at that minute. They have told me in one way or another that the sudden silence was the Voice of God. So we still have among us some men who can remember when God spoke clearly to mankind.'

And what, exactly, did God (by whatever name: Allah, Krishna, Yahweh...) or the Gods say? we might ask. Well even those who profess little more than scant knowledge of religious texts that purport to represent the word of God might suggest that s/he simply breathed a (silent) sigh of relief that the insanity of mass warfare had ended. For now at least.

For those of us concerned with the struggle to create cultures of peace or, even, a world culture of peace, there are some fundamental questions to consider including the classic question discussed by two of humanity's greats - Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud - when they tackled the question ['Why War?'](#)

Of course, as many people now understand it, peace entails far more than simply a state without military (including terrorist) violence and war. Beyond these forms of violence, many exponents of peace seek the end of other dimensions of what I call 'visible' violence, including:

1. Direct violence that goes beyond military violence, such as 'biological violence' (that is, violence against the body) in the family home and as a result of violent crime as well as 'physical violence' (that is, constraints on movement). See ['Violence, Peace, and Peace Research'](#).
2. Institutional violence: socially endorsed violence including that inflicted by parents, teachers, police, legal and prison systems - see ['Punishment is Violent and Counterproductive'](#) and ['The Rule of Law: Unjust and Violent'](#)- and which now manifests in a myriad other forms with the emergence of the surveillance state that spies on and gathers endless data on individuals to build substantial personal profiles on each - linking many personal records including those related

to health and financial matters with political activities and consumption patterns – in violation of any basic understanding of, or commitment to, human rights in their many political, economic, social, cultural and other forms.

3. Structural violence which Mohandas K. Gandhi originally identified when making his observation that ‘exploitation *is* violence’ and Professor Johan Galtung – see [‘A Structural Theory of Imperialism’](#) and [‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research’](#) – later elaborated as violence built into structures, such as capitalism and imperialism, that deprive some people of the opportunities to live full and meaningful lives and manifest, for example, as poverty, homelessness and the economic exploitation of people who live in Africa, Asia and Central/South America. And
4. Ecological violence: those activities ranging from destruction of the climate and rainforests to the killing of insects and wildlife that constitute destruction of the biosphere.

Of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive but they serve to illustrate categories of violence not always recognized as such.

Apart from these forms of ‘visible’ violence Professor Johan Galtung also identified the importance of psychological violence– ‘lies, brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds, threats, etc. that serve to decrease mental potentialities’ see [‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research’](#)– and coined the term ‘cultural violence’ to describe ‘those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence’. See [‘Cultural Violence’](#).

Beyond these and other categories of violence – including patriarchy and racism as specific manifestations of violence that are, arguably, simultaneously direct, structural and cultural – which stand between humanity and a culture of peace, *there are two other categories of violence which I will argue it is necessary to end before we can make profound inroads in ending those mentioned above.*

These two categories – which I have labeled ‘invisible’ violence and ‘utterly invisible’ violence – describe vitally important categories of violence which human adults inflict on children. Moreover, complemented by the ‘visible’ violence that adults inflict on children, it is this ‘invisible’ and ‘utterly invisible’ violence which destroys the unique human individual who was created during a nine-month gestation period and turns them into a ‘socially constructed delusional identity’ who submissively fulfils the extraordinarily limited expectations of their particular adult world and, with only rare exceptions, willingly participates in many if not all of the other forms of violence that torment our world and certainly includes inflicting invisible and utterly invisible violence on their own children. Which is why the cycle of violence goes on.

Why is this?

Because society is preoccupied with producing submissively obedient students, workers, soldiers, citizens (that is, taxpayers and voters) and consumers. Hence, the last thing society wants is powerful individuals who are each capable of searching their conscience, feeling their emotional response to events, thinking critically and behaving strategically in response. For that reason our parenting and education models use a ruthless combination of visible, ‘invisible’ and ‘utterly invisible’ violence to ensure that our children become terrified,

self-hating and powerless individuals like virtually all of the adults around them.

How does this happen? What is this 'invisible' and 'utterly invisible' violence?

Perpetrators of violence learn their craft in childhood. If you inflict violence on a child, they learn to inflict violence on others. The political leaders who decide to wage war, the military leaders who plan and conduct it, as well as the soldiers, sailors and aircraft personnel who fight war each suffered violence as a child. The terrorist suffered violence as a child. The man who inflicts violence on his partner suffered violence as a child. The corporate executive who exploits working class people and/or those who live in Africa, Asia or Central/South America suffered violence as a child. The racist or religious bigot suffered violence as a child. The individual who perpetrates violence in the home, in the schoolyard or on the street suffered violence as a child. The individual who overconsumes, or even consumes certain products, and/or otherwise destroys the biosphere, suffered violence as a child.

If we want to end violence in all of its manifestations and create a culture of peace, locally and globally, then we must finally end our longest and greatest war: the adult war on children. And here is an additional incentive: if we do not tackle the fundamental cause of violence, then our combined and unrelenting efforts to tackle all of its other symptoms must ultimately fail. And extinction at our own hand is inevitable.

How can I claim that violence against children is the fundamental cause of all other violence? Consider this. There is universal acceptance that behaviour is shaped by childhood experience. If it was not, we would not put such effort into education and other efforts to socialize children to 'fit into' their society. And this is why many psychologists have argued that exposure to war toys and violent video games shapes attitudes and behaviours in relation to violence.

But it is far more complex than this and, strange though it may seem, it is not just the 'visible' violence (such as hitting, screaming at and sexually abusing) that we normally label 'violence' that causes the main damage, although this is extremely damaging. The largest component of damage arises from the 'invisible' and 'utterly invisible' violence that we adults unconsciously inflict on children during the ordinary course of the day. Tragically, the bulk of this violence occurs in the family home and at school. See ['Why Violence?'](#) and ['Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice'](#).

So what is 'invisible' violence? It is the 'little things' we do every day, partly because we are just 'too busy'. For example, when we do not allow time to listen to, and value, a child's thoughts and feelings, the child learns to not listen to themSelf thus destroying their internal communication system. When we do not let a child say what they want (or ignore them when they do), the child develops communication and behavioral dysfunctions as they keep trying to meet their own needs (which, as a basic survival strategy, they are genetically programmed to do).

When we blame, condemn, insult, mock, embarrass, shame, humiliate, taunt, goad, guilt-trip, deceive, lie to, bribe, blackmail, moralize with and/or judge a child, we both undermine their sense of Self-worth and teach them to blame, condemn, insult, mock, embarrass, shame, humiliate, taunt, goad, guilt-trip, deceive, lie, bribe, blackmail, moralize and/or judge.

The fundamental outcome of being bombarded throughout their childhood by this ‘invisible’ violence is that the child is utterly overwhelmed by feelings of fear, pain, anger and sadness (among many others). However, mothers, fathers, teachers, religious figures and other adults also actively interfere with the expression of these feelings and the behavioral responses that are naturally generated by them and it is this ‘utterly invisible’ violence that explains why the dysfunctional behavioral outcomes actually occur.

For example, by ignoring a child when they express their feelings, by comforting, reassuring or distracting a child when they express their feelings, by laughing at or ridiculing their feelings, by terrorizing a child into not expressing their feelings (for example, by screaming at them when they cry or get angry), and/or by violently controlling a behavior that is generated by their feelings (for example, by hitting them, restraining them or locking them into a room), the child has no choice but to unconsciously suppress their awareness of these feelings.

However, once a child has been terrorized into suppressing their awareness of their feelings (rather than being allowed to have their feelings and to act on them) the child has also unconsciously suppressed their awareness of the reality that caused these feelings. This has many outcomes that are disastrous for the individual, for society and for nature because the individual will now easily suppress their awareness of the feelings that would tell them how to act most functionally in any given circumstance and they will progressively acquire a phenomenal variety of dysfunctional behaviors, including some that are violent towards themselves, others and/or the Earth.

From the above, it should also now be apparent that punishment should never be used. ‘Punishment’, of course, is one of the words we use to obscure our awareness of the fact that we are using violence. Violence, even when we label it ‘punishment’, scares children and adults alike and cannot elicit a functional behavioural response. See [‘Punishment is Violent and Counterproductive’](#).

If someone behaves dysfunctionally, they need to be listened to, deeply, so that they can start to become consciously aware of the feelings (which will always include fear and, often, terror) that drove the dysfunctional behaviour in the first place. They then need to feel and express these feelings (including any anger) in a safe way. Only then will behavioural change in the direction of functionality be possible. See [‘Nisteling: The Art of Deep Listening’](#).

‘But these adult behaviors you have described don’t seem that bad. Can the outcome be as disastrous as you claim?’ you might ask. The problem is that there are hundreds of these ‘ordinary’, everyday behaviors that destroy the Selfhood of the child. It is ‘death by a thousand cuts’ and most children simply do not survive as Self-aware individuals. And why do we do this? As mentioned above, we do it so that each child will fit into our model of ‘the perfect citizen’: that is, obedient and hardworking student, reliable and pliant employee/soldier, and submissive law-abiding citizen (that is, one who pays their taxes and votes and/or lobbies politicians).

Moreover, once we destroy the Selfhood of a child, it has many flow-on effects. For example, once you terrorize a child into accepting certain information about themselves, other people or the state of the world, the child becomes unconsciously fearful of dealing with new information, especially if this information is contradictory to what they have been terrorized into believing. As a result, the child will unconsciously dismiss new information out of hand.

In short, the child has been terrorized in such a way that they are no longer capable of learning (or their learning capacity is seriously diminished by excluding any information that is not a simple extension of what they already 'know'). If you imagine any of the bigots you know, you are imagining someone who is utterly terrified. But it's not just the bigots; virtually all people are affected in this manner making them incapable of responding adequately to new (or even important) information. This is one explanation why some people are 'climate deniers', most people do nothing in response to the climate catastrophe and even those people who do take action usually do so ineffectively. See ['The Global Climate Movement is Failing: Why?'](#)

But the same can be said for those working to end war – see ['The War to End War 100 Years On: An Evaluation and Reorientation of our Resistance to War'](#) – end the nuclear weapons race or engage in other struggles, including liberation struggles, that are vital parts of the global struggle to create a culture of peace. See ['Why Activists Fail'](#).

To briefly reiterate this vital point (that each child has been terrorized in such a way that they are no longer capable of learning or their learning capacity is seriously diminished): The multifaceted violence inflicted throughout childhood and adolescence ensures that the adult who emerges is suppressing awareness of an enormous amount of fear, pain, sadness and anger (among many other feelings) and must live in delusion to remain unaware of these suppressed feelings. This ensures that, as part of their delusion, the individual develops a strong sense that what they are doing already is functional and working (no matter how dysfunctional and ineffective it may actually be) while unconsciously suppressing awareness of any evidence that contradicts their delusion. They do this because, unconsciously, people learn to identify obedience with 'functional and working' (because they do not get punished for being obedient). See ['Why Violence?'](#), ['Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice'](#), ['Do We Want School or Education?'](#) and ['Love Denied: The Psychology of Materialism, Violence and War'](#).

As an aside, if you want to read more evidence of humanity's 'love' for our children and get a clearer sense of just how deeply violence is buried in human society, see ['Humanity's "Dirty Little Secret": Starving, Enslaving, Raping, Torturing and Killing our Children'](#).

Just one horrific outcome of this violence against children is that our planet is run by a global elite that is completely insane. See ['The Global Elite is Insane Revisited'](#). And this elite plays a key role in driving many of the more obvious manifestations of violence in our world.

Responding to Violence Strategically to Create a World Culture of Peace

However we define the many positive elements of a culture of peace – which will presumably include an inclusive philosophy of society, a cooperative set of social relations, nonviolent methods for dealing with conflict and sustainable patterns of matter-energy use while allowing universal human access to the resources necessary to maintain health and well-being, opportunities for meaningful political and economic engagement as well as cultural opportunities in art, literature and music among its many other forms, while engaging sustainably with the biosphere to enhance life-opportunities for all other species – this culture of peace can only be achieved if we respond strategically to the violence in our world.

And this means that we must address the fundamental cause of human violence because

this drives violence in each and all of its other dimensions. For those adults powerful enough to do this, there is an explanation in [‘Putting Feelings First’](#). And for those adults committed to facilitating children’s efforts to realize their potential and become self-aware (rather than delusional), see [‘My Promise to Children’](#).

Creating a culture of peace, therefore, relies fundamentally on understanding the critical role of suppressed feelings (emotions) in shaping deep culture and generating conflicts, including violent conflicts, and then taking action that addresses this cause.

This includes the need to understand and deal effectively with those emotions that are being acted out dysfunctionally and/or being projected – see [‘The Psychology of Projection in Conflict’](#) – in a particular context, which is standard human behaviour in many situations. See [‘Nisteling: The Art of Deep Listening’](#). Otherwise, that most fundamental of emotions – fear – will continue to drive most cultural predispositions and conflicts in all contexts and make genuine resolution of conflicts virtually impossible. This is because it is only if people are not afraid that discussions about ideas in relation to making culture evolve as we plan (rather than unconsciously or as elites direct) and to resolve conflict nonviolently, become easily possible.

Fundamentally, our parenting and education models fail utterly to produce people of conscience, people who are emotionally functional, people who are capable of critical analysis, people who care and people who can plan and respond to violence strategically. As Professor Galtung noted just recently, ‘While we are busy exploring whether there is intelligent life on other planets, we might spend more time – and intelligence – exploring whether there is [intelligent life] on ours.’ See [‘United States vs Moby Dick’](#). The problem is that once we terrorize a child, the terrified adult who emerges from childhood behaves as guided by their (unconscious) fear, not by any intelligence they may possess. Again, this is routinely illustrated by the failure of even those who self-label as ‘activists’ to think, plan and act strategically. See [‘Why Activists Fail’](#).

Of course, we do not need to work on ending violence against children in isolation. We can campaign to end other manifestations of violence – such as war, nuclear weapons and power, economic exploitation, ecological violence in its many forms including geoengineering and the deployment of 5G, violence against women and indigenous peoples, occupations and dictatorships – at the same time. See [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#) and [Nonviolent Defense/Liberation Strategy](#).

But if we work to end the many manifestations of violence while failing to address the fundamental cause then, ultimately, we must fail, even if we elongate our timeframe a little. See [‘Human Extinction by 2026? A Last Ditch Strategy to Fight for Human Survival’](#).

If you are also interested in working locally to reduce your consumption and become more self-reliant, in order to reduce your ecological violence, consider participating in [‘The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth’](#).

Alternatively, if you want something simpler, consider committing to:

The Earth Pledge

Out of love for the Earth and all of its creatures, and my respect for their needs, from this day onwards I pledge that:

1. *I will listen deeply to children (see explanation above)*
2. *I will not travel by plane*
3. *I will not travel by car*
4. *I will not eat meat and fish*
5. *I will only eat organically/biodynamically grown food*
6. *I will minimize the amount of fresh water I use, including by minimizing my ownership and use of electronic devices*
7. *I will not buy rainforest timber*
8. *I will not buy or use single-use plastic, such as bags, bottles, containers, cups and straws*
9. *I will not use banks, superannuation (pension) funds or insurance companies that provide any service to corporations involved in fossil fuels, nuclear power and/or weapons*
10. *I will not accept employment from, or invest in, any organization that supports or participates in the exploitation of fellow human beings or profits from killing and/or destruction of the biosphere*
11. *I will not get news from the corporate media (mainstream newspapers, television, radio, Google, Facebook, Twitter...)*
12. *I will make the effort to learn a skill, such as food gardening or sewing, that makes me more self-reliant*
13. *I will gently encourage my family and friends to consider signing this pledge.*

And you might wish to join the worldwide movement of people working to end all violence by signing the online pledge of [‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#).

Conclusion

The foundation of our violent world is the unending visible, invisible and utterly invisible violence that human adults inflict on our children. For that reason, it does not matter what superstructure we build on top of this foundation. Whether we use capitalism (and ‘democracy’), socialism or any other political-economic-social model, tack on a New Green Deal or a Just Transition, while the violent foundation on which society is built – violence against children – remains unaddressed, a culture of peace cannot be created.

So we need to raise children in a culture that does not involve terrorizing them so that they end up perceiving violence as the primary way to address conflict because they are too scared to simply perceive the power of, and use, principled nonviolent options.

Hence, until our parenting and teaching models are radically altered, a culture of peace will remain an impossible dream. And human extinction in the near term is inevitable.

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